

Dubbed simply as the irrepressible Mr. Ralph, he involved himself in virtually creating the esthetic appearance of those who came to his beauty salon to design a better look of themselves and thus achieve a more confident self-esteem.

Out of his hard work and diligence, coupled with his business acumen and personal warmth, his fame as Miami's hairstylist par excellence emerged. Under the aegis of his salon, Hairstyles by Mr. Ralph, he became the legendary cosmetologist whose advice on the challenges of beauty culture and intricacies of hairstyling was sought far and wide.

His tremendous entrepreneurship ultimately propelled him to his engagement with the well-being of Miami's innercity residents. In 1983 he was appointed President of the Allapattah Merchants Association where he superbly managed the development and construction of a private/public business venture toward the retailing of beauty products and the consolidation of a series of pharmaceutical operations. While he exercised optimum vigilance over the business aspects of the Association, he became involved with the overall amelioration of the residents in the innercity.

Sensitized by the awesome hurdles which poor families have to contend with in getting affordable housing and access much-needed capital, Mr. Ralph Packingham became the Executive Director of the Word of Life Community Development Corporation under the auspices of the Word of Life Missionary Baptist Church. At the most recent gathering, in Liberty City tendered to acknowledge his countless contributions to our community, the Rev. Richard P. Dunn II, his pastor, described him as "... a man among men (who) has impacted the lives of thousands of people."

His commitment to affordable housing paved the way for his becoming the driving force of detached, affordable single family homes in Liberty City. The first two of these affordable homes were dedicated last Monday, December 10, 2001. More poor families from Miami's innercity will soon move in and live in their respective dream homes via the low-cost affordable housing initiative born out of the vision and fortitude of this outstanding community leader.

Ever since I have known this quintessential trailblazer who leads by the fortitude of his exemplary sacrifices, Mr. Ralph has always been at the forefront of ensuring equality of opportunity in our community. Countless others have been touched by his unflinching advocacy for those who could least fend for themselves. Though currently ailing and confined to a wheel chair, this 72-year old dynamic personality goes about his leadership role over the faith-based Word of Life CDC in reaching out to poor families, engendering in them genuine hope and optimism.

Buoyed by his sterling Faith in a providential God, he has been and continues to be our community's superlative steward and consummate activist. He is a decent and caring man who thoroughly understands the accouterments of power and leadership by exercising them alongside the mandate of his conviction and the wisdom of his conscience. The uniqueness of his *modus operandi* genuinely personifies his credo that "... you gotta do a lot of praying and a little politicking" to ameliorate the lives of others.

Mr. Ralph Packingham epitomizes a refreshing advocate whose unflinching compassion

and resilient spirit appeal to our noblest character. Indeed, I feel so privileged but deeply humbled to represent him in the hallowed halls of Congress.

CONGRATULATING STEPHEN JOHNSON AND DENNIS PARKER ON THEIR ESSAYS ABOUT "WHAT MAKES AMERICA GREAT"

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2001

Mr. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, each year Crestwood Elementary School in Swanton, Ohio spends Veterans' Day honoring local veterans. It is an insightful and moving day-long series of events in which both the children and adults fully participate. The 2001 observance featured two essays describing "What Makes America Great" which I would like to enter into the RECORD. The first is by 6th grader Stephen Johnson and the second by 6th grader Dennis Parker.

Three things that make America great are: freedom, the land and its climate, and the people.

First of all freedom makes America great because we can choose our government. For example we can elect candidates for president, vice president, mayor, trustee, secretary, and various other offices within our country's governmental system. We have the freedom to go where we want, and how we're going to get there. We also have freedom to buy, and drive what we want. For example, we can buy airplane tickets, cars, houses, and many other things. We are even allowed to choose what we want to do with our lives. For example we could be a doctor, nurse, dentist, president, vice president, and many different jobs within our country.

Secondly America's land and its climate make America an abundant and bountiful country to live in. The land provides us with minerals, food, water, shelter, wildlife, and the clothes such as cotton. The climate provides this country with sunshine, darkness, warmth, coldness, and the four seasons. The climate has caused America to form oceans, mountains, valleys, plateaus, and hills. The natural resources give us wood for pencils, lumber, paper, and fire, oil for cars and other automobiles, water for drinking, and land for farming.

Thirdly the people make America great because history and events are based on people. The people are faithful, and loyal to their country. There are many different kinds of people living in America. The history, and events are based on people because there was the Boston Tea Party, World War I, World War II, and there was the tragedy that happened just recently. The people are faithful, and loyal to their country by recycling, burning waste, not polluting the air, and many other things to help our environment. There are many different kinds of people living in America because in America you are free to pick your job, your house, and many other things that make America a great place to live in.

Here is the second essay:

If you want to know what makes America great, then take a look around you. I think people took America for granted until the terrorists' acts on September 11, 2001. In a heartbeat, innocent lives were destroyed.

Instead of television heroes like Batman and Superman, they became firefighters, po-

licemen, and just ordinary people like moms and dads, every day Americans just like you and me.

Our country's freedom was taken for granted by Americans that was won by our veterans and forefathers. We fought in wars to end injustices, communism, and nationalism. Now, we are trying to stop terrorists, and our country is united even more.

People show their love and patriotism for our country by flying flags, giving blood, money and food to people in need. They don't care about how much money we have or our skin color. They just want to help out. That is why America is the best country in the world.

If you want to know what freedom is, then look around you. We have freedom of speech, religion, and education. We can go to school, speak, and pray without being punished. We aren't told what job to have, where to live, and what to do. We have many laws, but they are not to punish us, they are to protect us.

America is great because we can vote for whomever we want in a secret ballot. We are allowed to choose our president, governor, or mayor without being punished.

So basically, America is cared for and so are its people. They want to help America and make it even more united. Our veterans played a very important part in American history because they helped us gain freedom.

So remember every time you say the Pledge of Allegiance, or sing the national anthem, be proud, and think of our real heroes. We are united because we are free and we are free because we are United. God Bless America!

HONORING THE DEARBORN/DEARBORN HEIGHTS CHAPTER OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR 50TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2001

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to pay tribute to the Dearborn/Dearborn Heights Chapter of the League of Women Voters on their 50th Anniversary.

Recognized by the National League of Women Voters on December 19th, 1951, the Dearborn/Dearborn Heights Chapter has fulfilled and continues to fulfill its primary goal of encouraging the informed and active participation of citizens in government, working to increase understanding of major public issues and influencing public policy through education and advocacy.

The Dearborn/Dearborn Heights Chapter has provided numerous services to the community since their inception in 1951. In 1952, they provided election-day childcare in 63 precincts, allowing parents to vote. They helped establish the Northwestern Child Guidance Clinic in 1963. Throughout the years, they have worked with ABC News on election-day exit polling. These fine women have helped pass library proposals and establish a diversity committee which works to engage local students in community discussions. Mr. Speaker, these women have served their community well.

Though they are a non-partisan group, the Dearborn/Dearborn Heights Chapter of the League of Women's Voters is extremely political, focusing their efforts on child health and

welfare, juvenile justice, and campaign finance reform. A League representative sits on the Rouge River Advisory Council, as well as the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments Educational Advisory Council. As spelled out in their original charter, the League's actions are always a reflection of their member's priorities.

I would like to recognize the current officers of the Dearborn/Dearborn Heights Chapter of the League of Women Voters: Elizabeth Linick, Janice Berry, Mary Jo Durivage, Mary Anne Wilkinson, Jeni Dunn and Mary Bugeia. I thank all the fine members of this Chapter of the League for all their hard work over the past 50 years, and would ask that they keep it up. On the occasion of their 50th anniversary, I would ask all my colleagues to salute the Dearborn/Dearborn Heights Chapter of the League of Women Voters.

INTRODUCTION OF THE DEFERRED ANNUITANT FAIRNESS ACT OF 2001

HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2001

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, later today I will introduce legislation, the Deferred Annuity Fairness Act of 2001, to correct a glaring inequity in Federal retirement law. At a time when we are considering legislation to protect the hard-earned retirement benefits of working men and women—and give them more control and responsibility over their income in retirement, at least one class of federal government retirees find themselves at an unfair disadvantage and their retirement benefits eroded through no action of their own.

I speak of deferred annuitants of the federal government—employees who work for the Federal Government for at least five years, vest in the retirement program, and who separate from service before becoming eligible for immediate retirement. When these individuals claim their retirement annuity in later years, the pension benefit they have financed is eroded by inflation and they are put at a financial disadvantage which they cannot overcome.

Under current law and practice, the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund invests employee contributions but gives no added value to a retiree for the time his or her money was invested before the deferred annuity starts to be paid out. As a consequence, if two employees gave identical service, with the first retiring in 1970 and the second in 2000 with annuities for each starting in 2000, the second retiree receives nearly five times the annuity of the first. In addition, the spouse of a CSRS retiree is not protected during the deferral period. (This protection is already afforded to FERS spouses and spouses of Members of Congress participating in CSRS.)

This legislation will make two primary changes in current law to correct this inequity. First, it will compensate deferred annuitants for the added value generated over the deferred period from investing what was deposited into the trust fund on behalf of the employee up to the time of separation from service is compensated. Second, it will eliminate the disparity in spousal protection for deferred annuitants covered under CSRS and FERS.

Mr. Speaker, fairness and equity should be the watchword when it comes to the treatment of our federal workforce—the hundreds of thousands of men and women who dedicate their lives to service to this nation and our people. With the changes proposed in the legislation I introduce today, federal employees who take a hiatus from their federal service before retiring will be protected from inflation and the erosion of their pension benefit available upon retirement. I urge my colleagues to join me in support of these changes.

This measure is endorsed by the National Association of Retired Federal Employees.

RETIREMENT OF TOM MILLER,
PRINCIPAL OF ST. JOSEPH HIGH
SCHOOL IN ST. JOSEPH, MICHIGAN

HON. FRED UPTON

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2001

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to offer heartfelt congratulations to Tom Miller. Throughout his career, Tom Miller has constantly demonstrated a commitment to the educational and athletic development of the future leaders of our society. His professional life has consisted of numerous positions of leadership at various schools in Southwest Michigan, including his current post as principal of St. Joseph High School, which he has served for over 23 years. Tom's dedication to the enhancement of the educational experience of young people is a truly noble quality, and one that will be sorely missed.

Additionally, Tom's involvement in the athletic arena of the school system has earned him a place in the Battle Creek St. Philip High School Athletic Hall of Fame. Tom spent numerous years involved in student athletics, his basketball teams enjoying a host of victories during his tenure. I would like to wish the best of luck to Tom in his retirement, which will allow him to spend the coming years with his family, including his wife Mary Lou and all of his loved ones.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1,
NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT OF
2001

SPEECH OF

HON. PHILIP M. CRANE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2001

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, I want to praise President Bush for putting forth an education plan that offered children in failing schools a chance to get a better education. It is too bad that Democrats and supporters of the failing status quo were allowed to gut the legislation, H.R. 1, at the Committee level to remove any chance for failing schools to successfully improve their performance or to let parents have the option to move their children to better schools.

I believe that control of education should be retained at the local level. Last year, Illinois high school students led the nation in Advanced Placement scores. With a few excep-

tions we have good schools in the 8th District, and I don't want to force parents, school boards, and teachers into a one-size fits all approach that might work in New York City or Atlanta but not in Barrington or Wauconda.

One of the reasons I supported broad-based tax relief, including eliminating the marriage tax penalty and doubling the child tax credit, is because it lets 70,000 married couples and families with 125,000 children in the 8th District of Illinois keep \$162 million per year in their pockets. That is \$162 million per year that families could spend in our district on education if they chose to do so.

Former President Ronald Reagan, in a March 12, 1983 radio address to the nation on education, said, "Better education doesn't mean a bigger Department of Education. In fact, that Department should be abolished. Instead, we must do a better job teaching the basics, insisting on discipline and results, encouraging competition and, above all, remembering that education does not begin with Washington officials or even State and local officials. It begins in the home, where it is the right and responsibility of every American."

When we send a dollar to the federal government from Illinois, we only get 75 cents back. In my district, we send more than \$2 to Washington and only get \$1 back. With a return like this, it is easy to see why I support letting taxpayers keep more of their hard-earned money and having parents decide locally how their money should be spent on education.

Federal education funding is at an all-time high, and H.R. 1 increases it by a huge amount. Yet, student achievement continues to lag. Most Republicans in Congress want to give local schools more freedom to use new models to solve old problems while maintaining high accountability standards. I am saddened that H.R. 1 does not accomplish this worthy goal.

One concept that has strong support from parents is President Bush's proposal to improve public education by testing children in reading and math in grades three through eight once each year. Under President Bush's proposal, schools would be held accountable for either improving scores or losing their federal money, which accounts for seven cents of every education dollar.

I fully support this provision and am gratified it has been included in the conference report before us today. In fact, during debate on H.R. 1 in May of this year, I voted against the amendment co-sponsored by Congressmen PETER HOEKSTRA and BARNEY FRANK to remove President Bush's test requirement from the bill. The tough new testing regimen designed to identify failing public schools—an idea at the heart of President Bush's education plan—survived when the amendment failed. But the rest of the President's plan to give local schools more control to make the changes necessary to improve and to give parents the option to move their children to a better private school were stripped out of the bill.

For the reasons I have outlined, I have decided to vote against H.R. 1. Again, I want to praise President Bush for his leadership in proposing creative solutions to improving the education of our children. I encourage him to continue to move the federal government out of the way and to give schools more flexibility and parents more choices for their children.